United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Talks between Government of El Salvador and FMLN to move to New York on Monday, 16 December; Secretary-General appoints three members of "Commission on the Truth" as requested under Mexico Agreement of 27 April.

- Secretary-General, in message to mark Human Rights Day, says links between peace, development and human rights are increasingly being recognized.

- General Assembly calls for register on conventional arms transfer; prevention of terrorism among other texts adopted by Assembly.

- Call for international attention to fate of Haitian nationals fleeing that country and for assistance to them contained in draft approved by Social Committee.

- Administrative and Budgetary Committee approves $9.5 million budget for special political questions, regional cooperation, trusteeship and decolonization.

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The Secretary-General's Spokesman announced today that negotiations between the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) were to move to New York on Monday, 16 December.

In a statement on Friday, the Secretary-General said that time was "fast approaching" for the talks to move to New York from Mexico so that he could intervene personally should the need arise. The move would also facilitate the participation of Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding in regard to arrangements for verification of the cease-fire.

The Spokesman further announced that Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar had appointed three members of the Commission on the Truth as requested under the Mexico Agreement, signed by the Salvadoran Government and the FMLN on 27 April 1991.

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The Commission would be charged with the mandate of "investigating serious acts of violence that had occurred since 1980 and whose impact on society urgently demands that the public knows the truth". The three appointees were Belisario Betancur, former President of Colombia; Reinaldo Figueredo, Former Foreign Minister of Venezuela; and Professor Thomas Buergenthal of the United States, former President of the inter-American Court for Human Rights and President of the inter-American Institute for Human Rights.

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The United Nations was observing today at Headquarters Human Rights Day. The Day marks the anniversary of the 1948 adoption of the landmark Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but focused this year on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the International Covenants on Human Rights.

In a message to mark the occasion, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said the links between peace, development and human rights were increasingly being recognized. He noted such "positive developments" as the rise of democratic movements that had enabled people in all regions of the world to "regain control of their destinies". He pointed out, however, that despite an inspiring Bill of Human Rights and other important conventions and declarations, reports of "indiscriminate use of power and brutalization of people" were heard almost every day. He added that world-wide poverty had also denied millions their right to live in dignity.

The United Nations, he said, if its members so wished, could become a focal point and centre for imaginative new initiatives and stronger mechanisms to deal with the challenges of ensuring democracy.

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The General Assembly has asked the Secretary-General to establish, with effect from 1 January 1992, a register of international arms sales.

In yesterday's vote, 150 countries voted in favour to none against, with two abstentions (Iraq and Cuba), to approve the resolution establishing a universal and non-discriminatory register of conventional arms. Countries were asked to provide data on military holdings, procurement through national production and relevant policies.

By the resolution, States were also asked to provide data on the number of items in the following categories of equipment imported into or exported from their territory: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile systems.

Explaining his country's vote, the representative of Cuba, Reng Juan Mujica-Cantelar, said that in principle, Cuba was not against a registry, but it was against a partial registry which only dealt with international arms transfer and ignored production, stockpiling, research and development, and

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weapons of mass destruction. As it stood, the text allowed free rein to countries which produced armaments, whereas importing countries had to report on all supplies received.

In other action yesterday, the Assembly adopted, without a vote, a resolution on the prevention of terrorism and the study of its underlying causes. By the text, it condemned terrorism and urged States to prosecute terrorists and prevent the organization of terrorist acts against other States. The resolution said it was without prejudice to the right of self-determination for peoples living under colonial or racist regimes.

The Assembly also asked the Secretary-General to continue seeking the views of Member States on means of combating terrorism, including the convening of an international conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to deal with international terrorism.

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International attention would be called to the fate of Haitian nationals fleeing the country and the need for support for the efforts undertaken to assist them under the terms of a draft resolution approved this morning by the General Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural).

Also by the text, the Assembly would strongly condemn the overthrow of Haiti's constitutionally elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and the subsequent violation of human rights in that country. particularly summary executions, torture, searches without warrant, restrictions on the freedoms of movement, expression, assembly and association and the repression of pro-Aristide demonstrations, among other things.

In another action, the Committee decided to postpone until this afternoon consideration of the draft resolution on enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections.

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Appropriations of $9,484,400 for the 1992-1993 budget section on special political questions, regional cooperation, trusteeship and decolonization were approved by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) yesterday during its ongoing debate on the budget proposal.

Discussion focussed on proposals to reduce funding, given that the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories remained the same as in 1988.

The Committee also discussed the planning and implementation of several new technologies under way in the United Nations, including the areas of telecommunications, an integrated management information system and an optical disk storage and retrieval system. The representative of the United Kingdom said the Secretariat should have the courage to stop the information system project now. No data had been provided to show that the new technology would pay for itself in terms of staff cost savings.

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